



Socialist Worker

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IT'S TIME FOR RESISTANCE **>>PAGES 3, 10&11**

INDIA

Amritsar—a very British massacre

IF THE tide of British rule in India can be said to have turned on one day it would undoubtedly be Sunday 13 April, 1919.

In the Punjabi city of Amritsar, a British officer ordered his troops to fire without warning into a peaceful gathering of unarmed Indians.

Hundreds were killed in cold blood.

>>Pages 14&15

REFUGEES



Rescued and then stranded by the racist EU

A RESCUE ship carrying 64 refugees has been stuck at sea after the Italian and Maltese governments refused to let it dock last week.

The German charity Sea-Eye's ship, the Alan Kurdi, rescued the refugees off the Libyan coast. They were still at sea at the beginning of this week.

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SOUTH AFRICA

A new socialist party could be a beacon of hope

THE SOCIALIST Revolutionary Workers Party has been formally launched in South Africa.

Over 1,000 delegates assembled in Johannesburg heeding the call to build "a party that is not a militant version of the ANC".

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THE THINGS THEY SAY

'My father is German, born in a very wonderful place in Germany so I have a very great feeling for Germany'

Donald Trump, whose father was born in New York

'First of all, we are not zombies. I would like to confirm to the House that that is the case'

Brexit minister Kwasi Kwarteng was last week forced to confirm the Tories are not the undead

'Zombie secretary with zombie ministers'

Labour MP Barry Sheerman on Brexit secretary Stephen Barclay

'They will have a riot on their hands'

An unnamed Tory on the impact of Theresa May doing a deal with Jeremy Corbyn

'Never assume that just because Monday has always followed Sunday, it always will'

Tory MP Oliver Letwin



Tired overworked Tories are hiding houses and lobbying

BORIS JOHNSON has “an over-casual attitude towards obeying the rules of the house” after a Commons standards watchdog found he had failed to declare his share of a property in Somerset on time.

The Commons standards committee said the former foreign secretary had breached rules by failing to declare a financial interest within the required time limit.

The committee dismissed Johnson’s claim that he had not fully understood the rules.

Johnson failed to register a 20 percent share of the ownership of the property within the timetabled 28 days of acquiring it.

The committee said this offence followed a previous failure to register a financial interest.

The ruling follows an earlier warning after Johnson was found to have failed to declare almost £53,000 of earnings before the 28-day deadline.

Last year Johnson was also found to have broken rules that prevent former

cabinet ministers taking up new jobs for three months after leaving office, by signing up for his £275,000-a-year Daily Telegraph column.

He apologised each time—so presumably that’s OK then.

NADINE DORRIES has complained that MPs have to actually work.

The Tory wrote of, “MPs eating wall to wall canteen food, no exercise, sleeping badly, working 18 hours a day in permanent atmosphere of unpleasant confrontation, dispute, disappointment and chilled fear from security threats.”

She currently earns a £79,468 salary a year as an MP.

On top of this, between 1 December 2017 and 30 November 2018, Dorries claimed £21,840 in expenses for a second home in London plus £1,522.42 for travel.

TORY OWEN PATERSON is on the payroll of Randox as a consultant. Randox is a private forensic testing firm based in Northern Ireland.

Paterson, the MP for North Shropshire, may have broken parliamentary rules on lobbying.

Paterson and Randox lobbied the Department for International Development to secure contracts from the department.

After a meeting the department sent Randox a list of contacts who could provide them with contracts.

Former environment secretary Paterson is paid nearly £100,000 a year by Randox.

Tories’ Universal Credit cover up

THE TORIES knew 17 months ago that the rollout of Universal Credit (UC) was causing significant hardship—and covered it up. A government-commissioned study on issues facing claimants moving to UC is dated November 2017, but was only published last Thursday. It was based on research carried out between October 2016 and July 2017.

It showed that some 78 percent of tax credit claimants who moved to UC were struggling with bills. A quarter said they were having “real financial problems” and falling behind with many bills.

Another 13 percent were falling behind with some bills, and a further 13 percent were keeping up but said it was a “constant struggle”. Some 27 percent struggled “from time to time”.

FIGURE IT OUT

43%

the increase in tax allowances for the richest from £95 billion in 2012 to £136 billion in 2018

6.4%

the share of national income going to tax breaks—up from 5.6% in 2012

4.4%

the share of national income going to social security payments excluding pensions. Down from 5.5 percent—a cut of £1 billion



AN ETHICS panel set up by Google has been scrapped after one week. Some 2,500 workers signed a petition against one board member being opposed to LGBT+ rights and immigration. The group was tasked with examining moral issues around artificial intelligence.

Gender pay gap grows in 45% of companies

THE GENDER pay gap has got worse at nearly half of Britain’s biggest firms over the last year. The gap grew at 45 percent of firms, and stayed the same at a further 7 percent.

The figures are for the year to 31 March.

Companies, charities and public sector departments that employ 250 workers or more have to publish their gender pay gap figures. Some 10,428 filed data—roughly the same as last year.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has said it will take action against firms that missed the deadline. But it doesn’t have a list of companies required to file figures.

Unequal

THE PAY gap grew at most of Britain’s biggest academy chains—at ten out of the 16 largest trusts.

At two of them, the Delta Academies Trust and the White Horse Federation, women earned 55p for every pound earned by men. The average pay gap was 31 percent across the 16 trusts—much higher than the 9.1 percent average.

Hard pressed royals get showered with presents

BECAUSE THE royals don’t have enough wealth and possessions, other rich scroungers have thrown more at them over the last year.

An official list of gifts given to the queen and other royals in 2018 was published last week.

Presents came from US president Donald Trump, the king and queen of the Netherlands and the High Commissioner for Malta.

Gifts included bottles of whiskey, sculptures, jewellery, paintings, wine and electrical goods. Trump gave prince Philip a fishing rod, a gold-plated Bafta Award pin and a bronze

Charles gets a fish

sculpture of a fox.

Piles of toys and baby accessories were showered on Harry and Meghan. For a baby that hasn’t yet arrived.

And as an added bonus, although the royals can use and wear the gifts, they aren’t considered to be their personal property. So they pay no tax on them.

Tory fine for election fix

A FORMER Tory Norwich City Council election candidate has been fined £300 after he admitted three counts of election fraud.

Alex Jackson-Dennis was the Conservative agent for Tory candidates in last May’s Norwich City Council elections.

He admitted three counts of election fraud—causing or permitting a false signature on nomination papers.

His verdict contrasts with Chris Fernandez, an election agent for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition.

Chris was sentenced to 15 months imprisonment for the same offence.

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Email reports@socialistworker.co.uk
Web www.socialistworker.co.uk
Facebook "Socialist Worker (Britain)"
Twitter [@socialistworker](https://twitter.com/socialistworker)



Newsdesk
020 7840 5656
Circulation
020 7840 5601



Write to
Socialist Worker
PO Box 74955
London
E16 9EJ

Climate rebellion set to spread across the world

by SARAH BATES

THOUSANDS OF climate activists are set to take to the streets this week in latest phase of the battle for the planet.

Thousands of school students plan their third mass protest to demand the government does more to tackle climate change.

Supporters of the direct action group Extinction Rebellion (XR) will descend on London on Monday—and say they will keep protesting until the government acts.

The group plans a number of occupations across central London.

Its activities include including blocking roads with plants and picnics, hosting talks and workshops, and staging direct actions throughout the city.

XR has mobilised thousands around its three central demands in just a few months.

It calls on the government to tell the truth about climate change.

It demands the state enact legally binding policy to reduce carbon emissions to zero by 2025.

It also insists that the government set up a national Citizens' Assembly to oversee the changes.

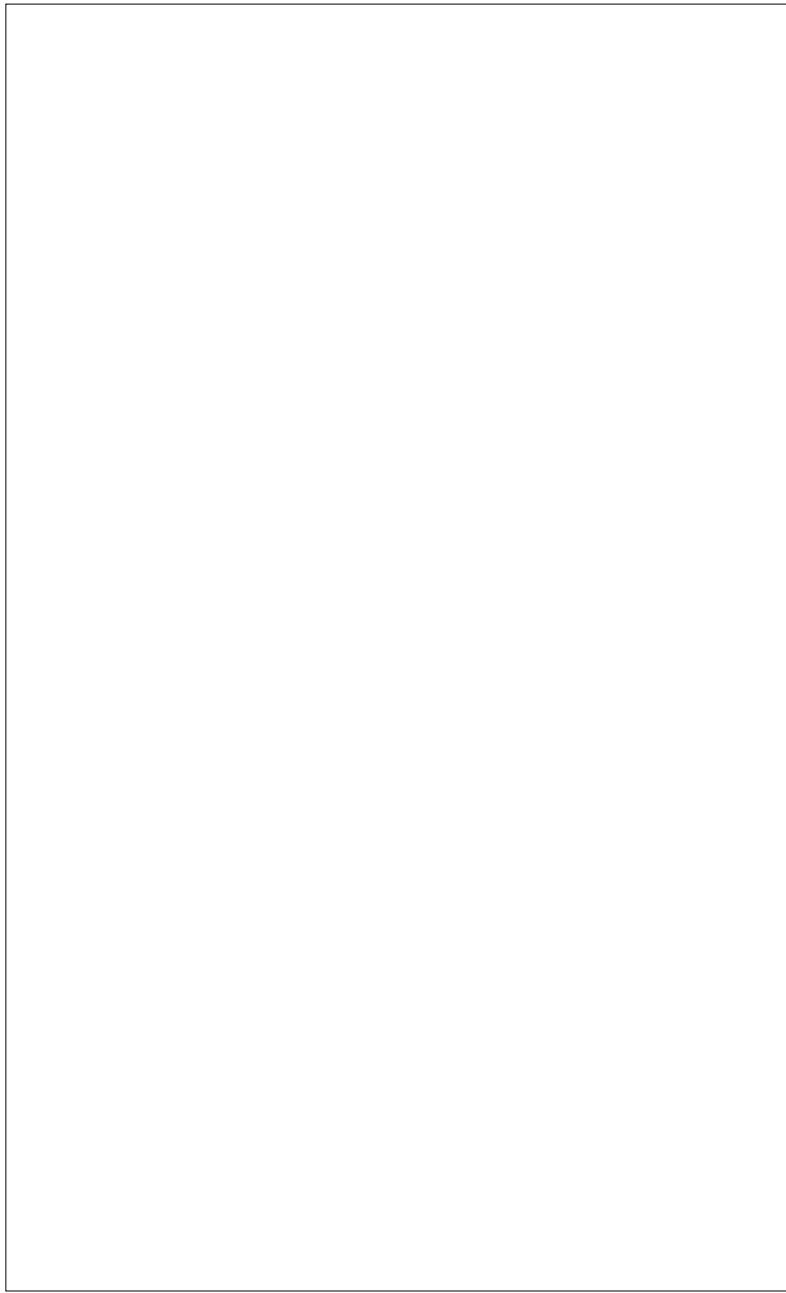
Police

In other countries, XR groups are planning their own actions as part of an event called International Rebellion.

Sophia, a student in Paris, told Socialist Worker they have organised “low key actions, because we didn’t know what to expect from the police”. Their plans include blocking public buildings.

She said that XR activists are working with Greenpeace, other climate change non-violent direct action groups, and the Yellow Vests.

“The policy of XR France regarding other movements is being discussed right now, but every member is free



EXTINCTION REBELLION activists block a fracking bosses' conference

to support any other movement. Many of us supported the Yellow Vests and we are working with other environmental groups,” she said.

This new climate movement is taking to the streets at a time when the effects of dramatic climate change can already be seen.

Stein, from Norway XR, told Socialist Worker the country was “seeing significant changes.”

These include “more frequent flooding, last year’s extreme drought period, and thawing of permafrost that is causing avalanches and pose a threat to infrastructure such as roads and railroads”.

“XR is just out of the starting blocks in Norway, yet we are convinced that we are ground zero for action designed to keep reserves of fossil fuel in the ground,” he said.

“If Norway doesn’t turn, then nobody will. We are a privileged nation and should show the way.”

Urgent

This urgency has fed into a sense that radical action is necessary immediately. In the Spanish state, XR has been meeting since October 2018.

Activist Chris said “desperation and a sense of uselessness” has contributed to the fast growth of XR.

He said this has meant that “the vast majority of our members don’t have any experience and are new to activism. We have a lot of university students and there is a real grassroots feel to it.”

“The emergence of XR was a saviour, bringing very different people together who want exactly the same thing. It gives you the feeling that you’re actually fighting for the planet, and not just watching it burn in silence” he said.

On other pages...
Heading for the sixth mass extinction? >> Pages 10&11

‘System is devastating my future’

SCHOOL STUDENTS’ day of action on Friday follow coordinated global strikes last month that involved 1.6 million students.

The school walkouts are inspired by the solo strike of Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg and are coordinated by the Fridays For Future movement.

The new climate movement on the streets is led predominately by young people. Many are spurred on by a United Nations report last year that said there are only 12 years left to avoid the worst-case scenario of climate change.

Members of Extinction Rebellion Youth blocked the entrances to a conference of fracking industry bosses in central London last week.

Attendees at the swanky Caledonian Club were forced to step over the activists, who were locked together with bike chains.

Sixteen year old Isla said, “Fracking and conferences like this are part of the system that is devastating my future.

“I refuse to be complicit in my own and everyone else’s destruction—I can’t trust adults to act responsibly anymore, so I am acting myself.”

Thousands join march in Finland

OVER 10,000 people marched for climate action in Helsinki, Finland, last Saturday.

The climate movement there has recently grown out of a series of smaller demonstrations.

At one protest activists scaled the columns of the parliament building and hoisted banners.

The current right wing government’s climate policy entails a programme of deforestation to produce biofuels.

This policy flies in the face of United Nations climate scientists’ advice to protect forests. The march came ahead of the Finnish parliamentary elections, scheduled for Sunday.

Organisers called on the next government to take concrete steps to tackle the climate crisis.

Lee Matthews

Take action over climate change

School strike Friday 12 April

Assemble at 11am,
Parliament Square,
central London

bit.ly/12AprilStrike
for local details



International Rebellion Monday 15 April

11am, Parliament Square,
central London

bit.ly/12AprilStrike for details

Movement forces out the Algerian president

Will protesters wind down their campaign after bringing down president Bouteflika or will they seek deeper change, asks Alistair Farrow

BACK STORY

The Algerian regime is facing a full-blown crisis as millions of people continue to demonstrate

- A huge movement of strikes and protests has forced out president Abdelaziz Bouteflika
- Protesters have fought the police, who fired tear gas and plastic bullets at them
- A rolling strike wave, incorporating extended strikes, crippled parts of the economy
- Many people say it isn't enough for Bouteflika to go—and they want the fall of the entire regime

PROTESTS HAVE continued after the fall of former president Abdelaziz Bouteflika

Thousands of people also

protested in France, and over 500 in Britain.

Rabie, one of the London protest

organisers, said, "Bouteflika has

gone. That's very positive for the

movement—we can see that we are

getting our goals, slowly."

Now a fight is on for the direction

of the movement.

There is a wide spread of ideas on

the future of the protests.

There is near-unanimous sup-

port for "system change", but what

this means is hotly contested. Some

argue for the removal of the corrupt

clique of businessmen and politicians

that gravitated around Bouteflika—

"Le Pouvoir", or "The Power".

Others argue for a civil state with

stronger democratic rights.

And others want the military to

intervene on behalf of the people.

Some think more fundamental

change is necessary with thor-

oughgoing economic and social

transformation.

The people at the top of Algerian

society are casting around for a

replacement for Bouteflika, one they

hope will choke off the fightback by

the mass of ordinary Algerians.

A government official told the

Middle East Eye news website, "The

sacred balance between the presi-

dency, the secret services and the

general staff is about to be altered.

"That's why everyone is worried

about what lies ahead."

The ruling class is terrified of a

real challenge to its rule.

The protests must continue to

keep the pressure on the state.

Yet jettisoning unpopular figures

may not be enough to placate either

rival factions within the

ruling class.

And the workers' movement can

play the decisive role by stopping

the bosses' profits.

Amaran on the London pro-

test told Socialist Worker, "For me

there are no limits—this is just the

beginning.

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ANALYSIS

CHARLIE KIMBER



Intervention in Libya means more horror

FOR ONCE a Tory has told the truth about Britain's wars. Foreign office minister Mark Field admitted in parliament on Monday that Britain's interventions in Libya have had "calamitous outcomes".

He spoke as further rounds of killings swept that country.

At the beginning of the week the Libyan National Army under the command of Khalifa Haftar was advancing on the capital city of Tripoli. They were clashing with forces loyal to the Government of National Accord (GNA), which is backed by the United Nations (UN).

The US reacted by withdrawing its troops stationed in Tripoli.

As the death toll rose and thousands of people were forced from their homes, British foreign secretary Jeremy Hunt spoke up. He said, "We're seeking to maximise British influence, European influence."

Libya has long been fought over by outside forces. Most recently a coalition of Western forces pummelled Libya and overthrew Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.

American and British forces fired over 110 cruise missiles and this was followed up by French, British and Canadian air raids. Eventually Nato air forces flew 26,000 missions.

British prime minister David Cameron claimed it was for "humanitarian" reasons and to prevent slaughter of rebel forces. This lie was accepted by all the main media—and sections of the left.

The real reason was that, as a wave of revolutions swept the Middle East—including Libya—the big powers wanted to secure their interests in oil-rich nations.

They wanted to control more of Libya's oil production, strengthen their influence in Africa, and improve their ability to launch further wars.

Western military intervention was initially a success in its own terms. Gaddafi was murdered and his regime destroyed. The US secretary of state at the time, Hillary Clinton, gloated, "We came, we saw, he died."

But Gaddafi's removal left a power vacuum that was filled by warring militias. The Libyan coast has since become the centre of a booming slavery industry.

Failure

So obvious was the failure that a parliamentary report in 2016 blamed Cameron for "political and economic collapse, humanitarian and migrant crises, widespread human rights violations, the spread of Gaddafi-regime weapons across the region and the growth of [Isis] in North Africa."

Just 13 MPs had voted against intervention in Libya, among them Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell.

The GNA was formed at the end of 2015, amid the usual platitudes from the Western powers about unity and peaceful development. But from the start it was unpopular and weak.

An alternative government was set up in the east of Libya. This too had little base and at one point was reduced to holding its governing assemblies on a car ferry.

Although the UN, the European Union, and the US nominally back the GNA, some Western powers—particularly France—have aided Haftar's alternative government. This is largely because it is believed to control 80 percent of Libya's oil production.

Haftar has also won backing from Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. None of this chaos should make anyone nostalgic for Gaddafi's dictatorship.

Before the revolutions of 2011 the myth was that only Western bombs and troops could bring down dictators. The revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt showed that to be false.

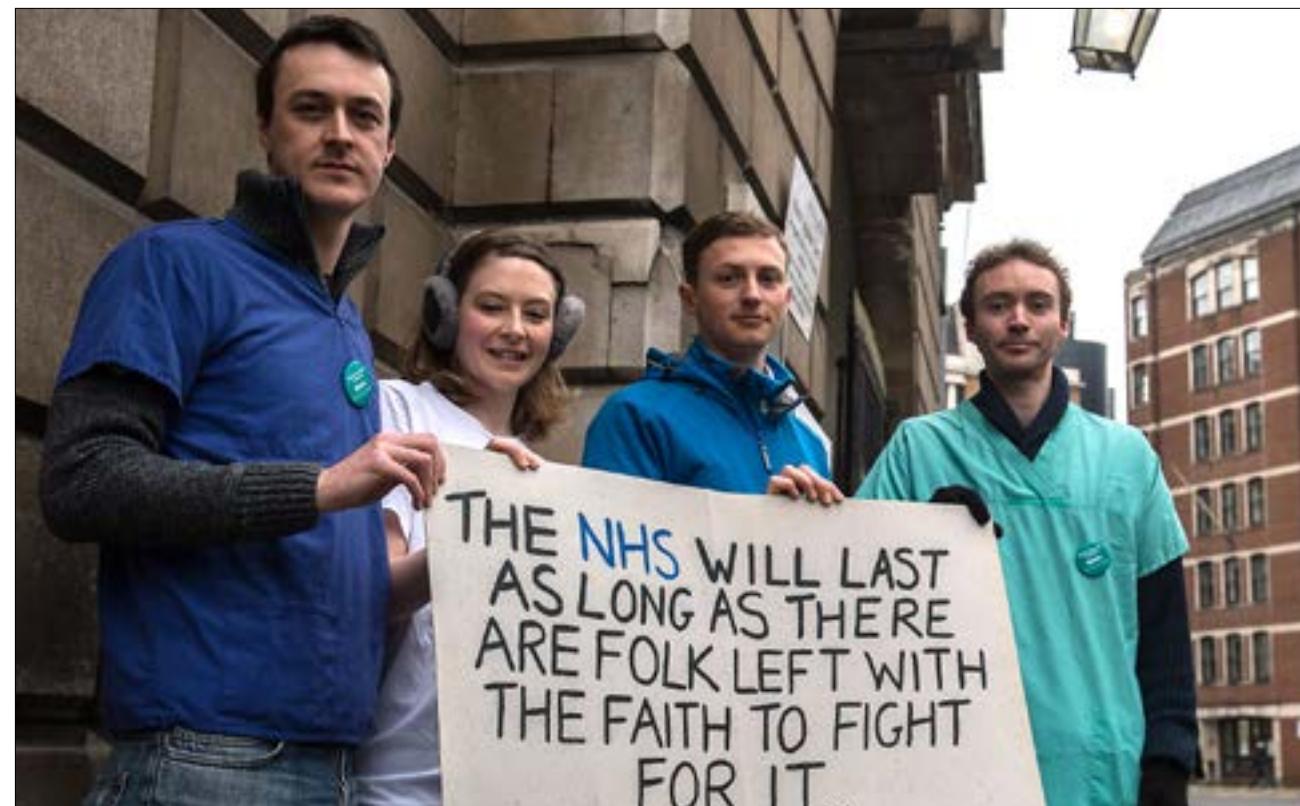
But those revolutions did not lead to liberation. Instead the process was killed and new repressive regimes installed.

This all happened with the support of the West.

Egypt's butcher president, general Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, was welcomed to the White House by president Donald Trump this week.

Now once again the uprisings sweeping Algeria, Sudan and elsewhere are showing there is a potential alternative to both dictators and murderous imperialist intervention.

The hope is that this time they will not be captured by generals or frauds out to lift up a new section of the ruling class. Instead ordinary people must carry through the revolutions to the end.



JUNIOR DOCTORS striking in 2016

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

Threat to sue doctors who speak out over privatisation

by TOMÁŠ TENGELY-EVANS

TORY HEALTH secretary Matt Hancock is stepping up the privatisation of the NHS just as a fresh scandal is rocking hospitals.

NHS England bosses threatened to sue one of their own trusts for libel if it publicly raised concerns over a privatisation plan in Oxfordshire.

Some 21 contracts in NHS England—together worth £127 million—are currently out to tender, according to research by the Labour Party.

One of the biggest contracts up for grabs is worth £91 million—to run the NHS 111/Clinical Assessment Service in the south east of England.

The hated Health and Social Care Act 2012 forces NHS England to put out to tender any contracts worth more than £650,000.

Contracts

This has seen private firms such as Virgin Care increase their share of NHS contracts.

And "independent sector providers"—such as charities and social enterprises—took some £8 billion in 2017/18.

That's a 50 percent increase since 2009/10.

The Tories have supported charities to run some NHS services in order to make privatisation seem more appealing. In reality it is

a stepping stone to larger private companies taking over the contracts later on. The absurdities of this process were shown up by a scandal over cancer service in hospitals in Oxfordshire.

NHS England handled an outsourcing process that handed a cancer scanning service to private company InHealth.

Doctors had warned that the plan would damage patients' health.

Outrage forced NHS England bosses to say that the cancer scanners will



Matt Hancock

remain at Churchill Hospital in Oxford and will be operated by NHS staff. Yet they said that InHealth would still be given the contract to run its service.

Hancock and the Department of Health and Social Care have now been called in to review the tendering process.

Shadow health secretary Jon Ashworth pledged to reverse privatisation at the Health Campaigns Together AGM last Saturday.

"Labour will bring an end to this profiteering in our NHS and restore our health service to public hands," he said.

Dead

"Tory privatisation will be killed stone dead under a Labour government.

"We'll bring forward the necessary legislation to reverse the Health and Social Care Act and reinstate a publicly provided NHS in our first Queen's Speech."

But Labour's manifesto at the last general election only promised to make the NHS the "preferred provider" in contracts.

And the Tories can inflict more damage before a Labour government gets into office.

There has to be action now—including by the unions—to stop the Tories' cuts and privatisation, not waiting for a general election.

Screws get a kicking

MORE THAN a dozen prison officers have been taken to hospital after an outbreak of violence at Feltham young offenders' institution in west London.

It has a deservedly poor reputation.

There was some improvement after a damning inspection in 2017. But even after changes the prisons inspector noted, "The segregation unit remained a grim environment with a poor regime and was

unsuitable for young people."

Feltham A unit mainly holds prisoners of 16 and 17. Unit B holds people between 18 and 21 years old.

Over 40 percent of inmates say they feel unsafe.

Prisons are dangerous places—for the inmates.

On average, prisons in England and Wales now witness an assault every 20 minutes, and a prisoner takes their own life once every four days.



Making prison dangerous

Refugees rescued but stranded on ship by EU

by TOMÁŠ TENGELY-EVANS

A RESCUE ship carrying 64 refugees is stuck at sea after the Italian and Maltese governments refused to let it dock last week.

The German charity Sea-Eye's ship, the Alan Kurdi, rescued the refugees off the Libyan coast on Wednesday.

The refugees, including ten women and six children, were stuck at sea at the beginning of this week in rough weather and with few supplies.

A message from the Alan Kurdi crew reported, "It's raining, the wind is blowing ever more strongly.

"The captain has ordered everyone to go below deck. There aren't any safe ports for us so far.

"We are in communication with the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Germany and hope for a swift resolution."

Italy's racist interior minister, Matteo Salvini of the Lega party, said the ship should "go to Hamburg".

Carlotta Weible from Sea-Eye said sailing to Hamburg in northern Germany was "completely out of the question".

"It's a journey of three or four weeks and we don't have food and water," she said.

The standoff over the Alan Kurdi is another reminder of Europe's deadly immigration system.

The Sea-Eye ship rescued the 64 refugees from a rubber dingy as it was looking for another boat with 50 people on board.

Missing

It has not been found, bringing the total number of refugees who have been reported as missing in the Mediterranean to 100 in just over a week. Weible warned, "Their chances of survival are low".

Salvini has repeatedly used racism in an attempt to gain votes.

He stopped the Doctors Without Borders rescue ship Aquarius from docking last June, then later ordered its seizure. It was finally forced to cease operations.

The Italian government said the people on board the Alan Kurdi should return to Libya.

From the ship, Evans from Nigeria said, "I left Nigeria, which has many problems, after both my

BACK STORY

German charity Sea-Eye's ship, the Alan Kurdi, rescues refugees

- Alan Kurdi is named after the Syrian Boy who drowned in the Mediterranean in 2015
- After saving refugees off the coast of Libya the ship has been refused permission to dock in Italy and Malta
- The EU has made it harder for refugees by closing off shorter, safer routes into Europe

parents died. I got to Libya but they are selling girls.

She added, "They threaten you with violence. They beat me and they used a knife on me. I saw many people killed.

"That's why I am on the way to Europe. The route is a bad one but we have no choice."

Bernjamin is also on board. He went to Libya in 2015. He said, "It is a hell. It is the most terrible place I have seen. They sold me for 500 dinars then they demanded 1000 dinars from me."

Designed

The brutal treatment of refugees flows from the European Union's (EU) "Fortress Europe" policy, which is designed to strictly control the trading bloc's borders.

A week ago the EU suspended sea patrols in the Mediterranean. They were dropped after the Italian government threatened to block an extension to Operation Sophia.

This EU-led military operation was launched in 2015 as growing numbers of refugees tried to make it to safety in Europe.

While rescuing some refugees, its aim was to try to stop people from making the journey.

And the EU has made it harder for refugees by closing off shorter, safer routes into Europe. The refugees are fleeing war, poverty, dictatorship and catastrophic climate change.

The only solution is to open the borders and let the refugees come here safely.

On other pages...

Amritsar—A very British massacre
>>Page 14

Anti-fascism



OVER 300 people joined a Unite Against Fascism and Stand Up To Racism protest in Newcastle last Saturday against around 30 fascists from the Northeast Frontline Patriots.

Italy's war on the Roma escalates as racists and fascists force families out

RACIST PROTESTS started in the Italian capital of Rome on Tuesday of last week after the council announced a bus would transfer 70 Roma to a reception centre in Torre Maura, an eastern suburb of the city.

Nearly half of the Roma people were children.

About 300 protesters gathered within a few hours in front of the entrance to the building, setting fire to cars and bins.

Fascist groups were at the heart of the protests.

The protesters were shown trampling on food destined for the Roma, and could be heard shouting, "They must die of hunger."

"Fucking apes should be burned alive," was written on the wall of the building and the car of a worker at the centre burnt out.

On Wednesday, Rome's city council, which is controlled by the populist Five Star Movement (M5S), capitulated and announced it had decided to relocate the Roma in another area. The fascists of CasaPound described the decision as a great victory. The fascist Forza Nuova party announced "a permanent garrison until the last Roma has left".

In July last year, the far-right



An anti-fascist protest in Rome last Saturday

interior minister, Matteo Salvini, vowed to "turn words into action" in his drive to expel thousands of Roma from Italy.

The number of racially motivated attacks has risen sharply, tripling between 2017 and 2018, when the racist League party entered government in coalition with M5S.

Marcello Zunisi, of the National Association of the Roma said, "The racist, fascist and Nazi squads organised in the CasaPound and Forza Nuova parties are allowed to act with impunity amid the crimes committed by government leaders."

"Italy is on the brink of a new abyss—that of the 'racial laws'. At a distance of 81 years from the

beginning of the Holocaust the essence of humanity is still at stake.

"It is necessary to defend the life of the Roma, Sinti and Caminanti threatened by barbarians and to release Italy from racism, fascism and Nazism."

There has been some opposition. "I'm not okay with it! No!" has become popularised as a slogan after 15 year old Simone was filmed standing up to the fascists. It was the slogan of an anti-fascist demo held last Saturday in Torre Maura. It was backed by a number of NGOs and the CGIL union.

The protest saw a number of local residents voice their opposition to the fascists.

A new party in South Africa could be a beacon

A new socialist party in South Africa is a welcome development, reports activist **Allen Goatley**

THE SOCIALIST Revolutionary Workers Party (SRWP) has been formally launched in South Africa.

Over 1,000 delegates from its many branches assembled in Johannesburg heeding the call to build "a party that is not a militant version of the ANC".

The party says, "We stand for revolution—we are for socialism".

The SRWP declared that it is a "Marxist-Leninist vanguard party". It added, "We openly declare for all the world to know that we as socialists are committed to building an organisation of a revolutionary working class that will seize power for the project of building socialism, in which no human will be exploited by another."

Spearheaded

The launch of the party was spearheaded by the National Union of Metal Workers (Numsa).

Numsa broke from its traditional home, the ANC-led Tripartite Alliance which involves the Communist Party and the Cosatu union federation, after the Marikana massacre of 2012. The massacre saw 34 striking miners killed by an elite police unit.

When Numsa broke from backing the ANC, it was expelled from the Cosatu trade union federation for its outspoken criticism of the then state president Jacob Zuma and of state corruption. Numsa vowed at the time to build a new workers' party.

For three days last week, delegates debated the founding documents

of the new party. Members warned against building a party leadership separated from its base.

The party promised South Africa "nothing but class struggle" and has entered national elections set for 8 May with the slogan of "Equality, work and land".

The party hopes to win some MPs but says "participation in parliament is not a destination but rather a tactic to expose the limitations of bourgeois democracy and to communicate with the masses".

The real test for the party will be showing its relevance in the day to day struggles of workers and the poor. It will need to act as a lever to increase people's confidence in the fight against capital.

We have at present a rising tide of xenophobia in the country spurred on by the statements of some government officials and right wing parties.

The SRWP will need to wade in heavily against this and use its influence in the trade union movement to mobilise workers against xenophobia. At present the party is dominated by Numsa members. It needs to open the gates.

Many excellent community and trade union activists are justifiably suspicious of party formations. To overcome this the SRWP will need to show respect for democracy, differences and minority views.

South Africa urgently needs a party of struggle and socialism.

Allen Goatley writes for Socialist Worker's sister publication in South Africa, *Keep Left*



The conference brought together over 1,000 delegates

PIC: @OFFICIALSRWP ON FACEBOOK

FRANCE



TEACHERS TAKE to the streets

PICTURE: FORCE OUVRIER/Flickr

Unions and the Yellow Vests resist

by CHARLIE KIMBER

TRADE UNIONISTS and Yellow Vests are set to march together this Saturday to defend the right to protest against vicious assaults from president Emmanuel Macron's government.

The CGT union federation said, "Faced with the proliferation of repression and the criminalisation of social movements, it is essential to remain mobilised in large numbers for the defence of public freedoms".

According to figures compiled by journalist Philippe Dufresne, police assaults have caused at least 200 head injuries, blinded 22 people in one eye and torn five hands apart.

A police inquiry report last week revealed that during Yellow Vest protests in January in Saint-Etienne, a 14 year old refugee lost an eye when hit by a police flashbang.

Last weekend, the 21st successive Saturday of protests saw smaller numbers than the week before. But still tens of thousands took to the streets.

Marched

There were major protests in Paris, Lille, Toulouse, Bordeaux and other areas.

Yellow Vests and CGT union members marched together in Rouen to defy a police ban on demonstrations in certain areas.

The unity of organised workers and Yellow Vests is needed to beat Macron. But union leaders are only

half-hearted in building it.

A teachers' strike last week saw widespread support with parents, school students and strikers marching together in some areas.

In another sign of progress, the second assembly of Yellow Vest representatives gathered in Saint-Nazaire last weekend to coordinate activity.

The first assembly at the end of January brought together 75 delegations. This time 300 delegations joined the Assembly of Assemblies.

Each delegation was chosen by its local Yellow Vest group. 800 people gathered, representing about 10,000 Yellow Vests according to the organisers. It is not yet a democratic national gathering, but it points towards it.

Israeli elections spell trouble for Palestinians

RESULTS OF elections in Israel were set to be announced as Socialist Worker went to press—with no good outcome for Palestinians.

Incumbent prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu said on Sunday that if he is re-elected he will annex all Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian West Bank. This would cement the occupation and make daily life harder for Palestinians.

His right wing Likud party appeared to be the frontrunner at the start of the week. But to stay

in government Netanyahu would need the support of smaller, even more right wing parties.

Netanyahu's main opponent, Benny Gantz, was in charge of Israel's army during its assault on the Gaza Strip in 2014, which killed 2,251 Palestinians. He began his election campaign by boasting that more than 1,000 "terrorists" were

killed under his command.

Gantz's newly-formed Blue and White party says it wants to "deepen" the separation between Israel and the Palestinians, but also wants to hold onto the settlements.

Some 400,000 Israelis live in the West Bank, in settlements built on stolen Palestinian land. Formally attaching them to Israel would leave Palestinians to live on fragmented scraps of land under Israeli military control.



Murderer Benny Gantz

The Paras are thugs of empire

THE VIDEO of British soldiers in Afghanistan using a picture of Jeremy Corbyn for target practice is shocking.

But the fact that these troops are from the Parachute Regiment (Paras) is not surprising.

The Paras have a reputation for being one of the most brutal and thuggish units in the British army.

They won one of their first regimental "battle honours" for their part in the Allied invasion of Greece in 1944.

The British army attacked left wingers who had been fighting the German occupation.

They even armed former Nazi collaborators to hold back the rise of the Communist Party.

And in 1972, it was the Paras who opened fire on a Civil Rights march in Derry in Northern Ireland.

They killed 14 people in a day that has gone down in history as Bloody Sunday.

The Corbyn video is a reflection of their dark colonial past in Greece and Ireland as well as their role in the continued British military operations in Afghanistan.

Corbyn was a prominent voice in the opposition to George Bush and Tony Blair's invasion of Afghanistan in 2001.

Eighteen years on, it's time to end that war, bring the Paras home, and disband one of the most notorious units in the British army.

Richard Donnelly
 South London



ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

Poverty means much more than not having lots of cash

GOVERNMENT statistics published last week showed a sharp increase in disabled people living in poverty.

The number of disabled people living in absolute poverty before housing costs rose by 200,000 within just one year.

For those of us living with the day to day reality of Tory cuts, this isn't a surprise.

But it is a terrible indictment of the system we live under.

Wealthy people running the government think poverty means not having much money.

They don't understand poverty. It means bleakness, fear, misery, hopelessness, no rest and no remission, stretching into a

degrading future. It means hunger, it means cold in winter, it means worsening mental health and it means bad living conditions and fear of being on the streets.

It means putting cardboard in your shoes to cover the holes and hoping it doesn't rain.

It means going around feeling that you're worth less than other people and feeling disempowered.

It means looking at what other people are buying and thinking, "I can't have that".

And for some people it means death by suicide, starvation or some other means.

There are now 5 million disabled people in absolute

poverty living terrible, degrading, miserable, half-lives.

It's a slow, unrelenting, living nightmare.

We must fight to get the Tories out and to reverse the brutal policies that have brought such misery.

Bob Ellard

Disabled People Against the Cuts

TORY MINISTER Justin Tomlinson was made to apologise last week for "inadvertent factual errors" over how much disability benefits would go up.

It shows how little the Tories care about ordinary people.

Julia Rymer

Worcestershire

Toffs want to keep poor people off public space

I READ Socialist Worker's feature on how developers are segregating playgrounds between rich and poor (Socialist Worker, 2 April).

The current scandal focuses on the Wren Mews estate in Lambeth, south London. A similar one took place in nearby Battersea a few years ago. The council proposed introducing an entry fee to access the playgrounds.

It would have excluded children from poorer backgrounds and created a

space where middle class children could play together without encountering working class ones.

Thankfully, the proposal was dropped.

This isn't anything new. Originally only "gentlefolk" were granted entrance to London's parks—the masses were actively excluded.

It seems there are many toffs and snobs in the capital who would welcome the return of such a policy.

Brian Eggleston
 On Facebook

Mogg's got a history of far right friends

JUST WHEN you thought Tory MP Jacob Rees-Mogg couldn't sink any lower, he manages to plumb new depths.

He approvingly retweeted a video of a speech by the leader of the far right Alternative for Germany Deutschland (AfD) party last week.

One former leader, Frauke Petry, resigned in September 2017 because of the growing influence of Nazis in the party.

Petry herself had called for cops to shoot refugees at the German border. And one candidate for



Jacob Rees-Mogg
 the AfD described Islam as "worse than the plague".

Not that any of this bothers Rees-Mogg.

He was challenged about retweeting the AfD

on the BBC Today Programme by Mishal Husain. Rees-Mogg claimed that the backlash was down to "leftie obsession" at the broadcaster.

And why would it bother him?

In 2013 Rees-Mogg spoke at an event organised by the far right Traditional Britain group.

Its vice president Gregory Lauder-Frost called for "assisted voluntary repatriation" for black people.

Bethan Turner
 East London

Just a thought...

Good news in health service

IT'S WONDERFUL news that the Tories backed down from closing two accident and emergency units in west London (Socialist Worker, 27 March).

There have been great local campaigns to save services at Charing Cross and Ealing hospitals. It's a real victory, but the fight goes on because the cuts continue.

Congratulations to all the campaigners.

Sarah Cox
 West London

■ THIS IS really good news. Well done to Anne Drinkel, chair of the Save Our Hospitals at Charing Cross.

Padraig Finn
 On Facebook

May's trap for Corbyn

THE BREXIT talks between Theresa May and Jeremy Corbyn won't work. And the right wing press are going to lynch Corbyn for messing it up.

Kevin Fischer
 On Facebook

Lexit is still a fantasy

THE LEFT has its hands full dealing with the racists emboldened by the Brexit success.

Trying to make it Lexit—a left wing exit from the European Union—is currently a fantasy.

And in the meantime my European friends and colleagues face an uncertain future here.

Many of those who do protest against racism are also against Brexit.

You might want to win all progressives to your position.

But the reality is that most of those on the left are Remainers and most racists voted for Brexit.

Andy Towle
 On Facebook

Rich women suffer too

IT DOESN'T surprise me at all that presenter Fiona Bruce has experienced sexism at the BBC.

When asking for a pay rise, she was told she didn't need one because she had a boyfriend.

Women at every level of society experience oppression.

Caroline Payne
 On Facebook



POLAR BEARS

ARCTIC FOXES

EMPEROR PENGUINS



LEATHERBACK TURTLES

KOALAS



WHOOPING CRANES

THE PLANET has entered the “sixth mass extinction”—and the situation could hardly be more severe. The WWF wildlife charity warned that “we are sleepwalking towards the edge of a cliff”.

“This is far more than just about losing the wonders of nature, desperately sad though that is,” it said in a major report last October.

“Nature is not ‘nice to have’—it is our life support system.”

For instance, insects face a rate of extinction eight times faster than mammals, birds and reptiles. They underpin much of the natural world and are vital for sustaining food production.

And plants—which are essential for human survival—are also in the firing line.

A “mass extinction” happens when the Earth loses more than three quarters of its species in a short period of time.

Five other mass extinctions have taken place in the history of the Earth and species extinction is a “natural process”. The fifth mass extinction, known for wiping out the dinosaurs, took place around 65 million years ago.

But the danger now is far more urgent—and it flows from capitalism.

Human

Scientists estimate that the current rate of extinction is anywhere between 1,000 and 10,000 times of what is “normal”. Some predict around 30 to 50 percent of all animal species are set to be gone by the middle of this century.

There’s no doubt that human activity is the main factor behind the vast majority of species currently under threat.

Humans have always had some impact on the natural world. But, before capitalism took hold, human society lacked the technical ability or reach to threaten extinction of a significant scale.

The Agricultural Revolution of the 18th century and the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century in Britain brought in industrial-scale

HEADING FOR EXTINCTION?

The “sixth mass extinction” poses a deadly threat to humans, animals, plants—and the future of the planet. Sarah Bates looks at what’s behind the worldwide destruction of the natural world—and how we can fight to stop it



HEALTHY CORAL and bleached coral (right)

The end of the great coral reefs?

THE PLANET’S corals are on the edge of extinction—there was an almost 90 percent decrease in coral growth recorded last year.

“One part was damaged by a cyclone, the surrounding reefs provided the larvae for recovery,” he said.

“But now the scale of severe damage from heat extremes in 2016 and 2017 was nearly 1,500 kilometres—vastly larger than a cyclone track.”

For some types of coral, these events have been disastrous. Last year there was a 93 percent drop in the type of coral that provides most of the reef structure, which supports thousands of other species.

The decline of the world’s corals are a warning siren about how heating oceans will spell death and disaster for many of the animal and plant species living in them.

This means that trees and shrubs that used to surround fields are gone or disappearing. And land is more intensely managed, usually only producing a small range of crops,

which reduces the quality of the soil. It’s led to a situation where more than 40 percent of insect species are declining and a third are endangered.

This has a knock-on effect because complex ecological webs mean the future of many species are bound up with each other.

When one species becomes scarce, it affects other animals higher up the food chain. And if it becomes extinct, it does irreversible damage to other species relying on it for their food or habitat.

Acidifying oceans cause corals to die and the shells of many marine animals to dissolve (see left). And warming temperatures are decreasing the habitat of ice-dwelling mammals and causing food webs—a series of food chains—to fall out of sync with each other.

This process can be seen clearly in the huge decreases in insect populations around the world. Research released in February indicated that globally the total mass of insects was falling by 2.5 percent every year.

And in Britain scientists last week said that the loss of pollinating insects “highlights a fundamental deterioration” in nature.

Impact

The UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme looked at the range of bees and hoverflies. It showed that they have been lost from a quarter of the places they were found just 39 years ago—and highlighted the impact of human intervention.

The widespread introduction of the bee-harming pesticide neonicotinoid in 2007 coincided with severe declines in some bee species critical for pollination.

Alongside harmful pesticides and natural habitat loss, intensive farming methods are another contributing factor.

Morgan Pratchett is a professor at the ARC centre of excellence for coral reef students in Queensland, Australia. “When

Polar bear numbers are hard to estimate, but their Arctic sea ice environment is under threat. They are forced to hunt for alternative food sources, sometimes on land. Steven Amstrup, chief scientist for Polar Bears International, said, “Some media reports have suggested that this might mean polar bears could just come ashore and eat terrestrial foods. We have absolutely no evidence that they have the ability to do this” he said.

Adelie penguin

Living in the Antarctic, this breed of penguins rely on tiny krill crustaceans which live underneath ice sheets. But melting ice sheets mean krill are dying off—so the penguins have to travel further for food, and have trouble breeding and raising young.

Golden toad

Last seen in 1989, the golden toad used to live in the mountaintop cloud forests of Central America. But a combination of a deadly fungus and the removal of its natural habitat has killed-off this species. It was last seen in 1989.

“We used to think that the Great Barrier Reef was too big to fail—until now,” said Pratchett.

It means numbers of extinctions are likely to snowball in the coming months, years and decades. Scientists have warned of domino effects.

Caterpillars

Researcher James Bell said, “For example, the leafing date of the oak tree determines when the caterpillars will appear. That determines when blue tits, which feed on caterpillars, will appear—and that determines when blue tits lay their first egg.

“If they become desynchronised, it has cascading effects through the food chain, leading to fewer eggs.”

In some countries where industrial agriculture doesn’t predominate, warming temperature is the main driver of insect decline. In Britain, these warming temperatures over just a 50-year period have altered food chains.

Some birds are laying eggs a week earlier and aphids are now emerging a month earlier. And potato crops are now planted later due to wetter winters, so aphids are attacking and damaging much younger plants.

Bell explained that “plants are just like babies with very poorly developed immune systems.

“So when a virus is transmitted into a young potato plant it has a much greater effect,” he said.

But it’s not just Britain—and not just insects.

The current rate of frog, toad and salamander extinction is estimated



CAPITALISM’S INTENSIVE farming techniques are wrecking the planet

to be over 25,000 times the normal extinction rate.

Amphibians are particularly sensitive to environmental changes. They have been hit hard with habitat loss, water and air pollution, ultraviolet light exposure and disease.

Deforestation threatens the habitats of around 90 percent of primates—with half of primate species threatened with extinction.

So what’s the solution? For some, it’s about tightening up regulations to protect animals and wildlife under threat.

In Australia, a parliamentary committee dealing with the extinction crisis has recommended new laws. It includes a proposal for a new environmental protection authority that would have powers and funding to enforce existing environment laws.

In Canada, ecological charities are calling for federal legislation to protect threatened salmon species.

The southern German state of Bavaria announced last week it will legislate to “save the bees” after a petition generated 1.75 million signatures. It will mean more organic

farming, more flowering meadows and better protection from pesticides for streams and rivers.

For others, part of the answer lies in “re-wilding”. In a letter published in the *Guardian* newspaper last week, climate activists called for “defending, restoring, and re-establishing forests, peatlands, mangroves, salt marshes, natural sea beds and other crucial ecosystems.”

There’s no doubt that human activity has driven the extinction crisis—and intervention by people will also be needed to tackle it.

Instead of a system that serves a tiny minority, billions of humans can cooperate in the interests of the immense majority. That requires political and economic change to a system of workers’ control and democracy—socialism.

While it’s too late to stop climate change, it’s not too late to stop all effects of climate chaos and species extinction. This means building a movement to defend our planet and every species on it.

It will require collective action on a mass scale by ordinary people. And this fight against ecological crisis can’t be divorced from every other fight for social justice and the struggle for sustainable socialist society.

As Elizabeth Kolbert, author of *The Sixth Extinction*, puts it, “Just because we’ve survived the loss of X number of species, can we keep going down the same trajectory?”

“Or do we eventually imperil the systems that keep people alive?”

“Even if we can survive, is that the world you want to live in? Is that the world you want all future generations of humans to live in?”

New pamphlet!



£1

by Sarah Bates, Camilla Royle and Amy Leather

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WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women. We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests. We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

To join us, turn to page 16 or go to www.swp.org.uk or phone 020 7840 5602 for more information

{ SOCIALIST WORKER } PUBLIC MEETINGS

GLASGOW

Mohandas Gandhi—experiments in civil disobedience

Thu 25 Apr, 7pm, Avant Garde, 33-44 King St, Merchant City, G1 5QT Book launch with author Talat Ahmed

HUDDERSFIELD

System change not climate change

Wed 17 Apr, 6.30pm, Brian Jackson House, 2 New North Parade (near both train and bus stations), HD1 5JP

LONDON: NEWHAM

As Sudan and Algeria revolt—are we seeing the return of the Arab Spring?

Wed 17 Apr, 7pm, Stratford Advice Arcade, 107-109 The Grove (next to Morrisons car park), E15 1HP

LONDON: TOWER HAMLETS

Why we need a revolution

Wed 1 May, 7.30pm, Weavers Community Forum, 10 Shacklewell St, E2 7EG

PORTSMOUTH

System change not climate change

Wed 17 Apr, 7.30pm, Somerstown Community Centre, River's St, PO5 4EZ

SOUTHAMPTON

A Marxist history of the Labour Party

Wed 8 May, 7.30pm, October Books, 189 Portswood Rd, SO17 2NF

YORK

Know your enemy—alt-right, the far right and fascists

Wed 1 May, 7.30pm, Friends Meeting House, YO1 9RL

{ SOCIALIST WORKER } BRANCH MEETINGS

Weekly meetings to discuss political issues and our local interventions. All welcome.

ABERDEEN

1919—Britain on the brink of revolution

Mon 15 Apr, 6pm, The Snug, Ma Cameron's, 6-8 Little Belmont St, AB10 1JG

BARNESLEY

The US Civil Rights movement

Thu 18 Apr, 6.30pm, Room 302 - The Civic, Hanson St, S70 2HZ

BIRMINGHAM

What would socialism be like?

Wed 17 Apr, 7pm, The Adam & Eve, 201 Bradford St, B12 0JD

CHESTERFIELD

1919—Britain on the brink of revolution

Thu 18 Apr, 7pm, Chesterfield Library, New Beetwell St, S40 1QN

COLCHESTER

Hi-vis fury—what's behind the Yellow Vest revolt in France?

Thu 25 Apr, 8pm, Oyster Room, Hythe Community Centre, 1 Ventura Drive, CO1 2FG

DERBY

Irish civil rights 50 years on—the case for a united Ireland

Thu 18 Apr, 7pm, West End Community Centre, Mackworth Rd, DE22 3BL

EDINBURGH

Irish civil rights 50 years on—the case for a united Ireland

Thu 25 Apr, 7pm, Friends Meeting House, Meeting House Lane, LA1 1TX

GLASGOW

Brexit shambles, Labour splits—how can we end Tory rule?

Thu 18 Apr, 7.30pm, The Gate House, 6 Priory Walk, DN1 1TS

DONCASTER

Brexit shambles, Labour splits—how can we end Tory rule?

Tue 16 Apr, 7.30pm, The Round Chapel, 2 Powerscroft Rd (corner Lower Clapton Rd), E5 0PU

DUDLEY

The people demand change—revolution in Algeria?

Wed 17 Apr, 8pm, The What Centre, 23 Coventry St, Stourbridge, DY8 1EP

EDINBURGH

Know your enemy—alt-right, the far right and fascists

Wed 17 Apr, 7.30pm, Friends Meeting House, 7 Victoria St, EH1 2JL

HULL

Brexit shambles, Labour splits—how can we end Tory rule?

Thu 18 Apr, 7pm, Cafe licous, 104 Cottingham Rd, HU6 7RZ

KENT

Knife crime—why are young people killing each other?

Thu 18 Apr, 7.30pm, Nucleus Arts Centre (Conference Room), 272 High St, Medway, ME4 4BP

LANCASTER AND MORECAMBE

Irish civil rights 50 years on—the case for a united Ireland

Thu 25 Apr, 7pm, Friends Meeting House, Meeting House Lane, LA1 1TX

LEEDS: CITY CENTRE

Irish civil rights 50 years on—the case for a united Ireland

Thu 25 Apr, 7pm, The Swarthmore Education Centre, 33-44 King St, Merchant City, G1 5QT

LIVERPOOL

System change not climate change

Thu 25 Apr, 7pm, Friends Meeting House, 22 School Ln, L1 3BT

LONDON: HACKNEY

From the Nakba to the Great March of Return—how can Palestine be free?

Thu 18 Apr, 7.30pm, The Round Chapel, 2 Powerscroft Rd (corner Lower Clapton Rd), E5 0PU

LONDON: NEWHAM

The Amritsar massacre 100 years on

Wed 24 Apr, 7pm, Stratford Advice Arcade, 107-109 The Grove (next to Morrisons car park), E15 1HP

LONDON: NORTH

Brexit—why we defend open borders

Wed 17 Apr, 7.45pm, St John Vianney Church Hall, 4 Vincent Rd, West Green, N15 3QH

LONDON: SOUTH

40 years after Blair Peach was killed by the police

Wed 17 Apr, 7pm, Vida Walsh Centre, 2b Saltoun Rd (near Effra Rd, facing Windrush Sq), Brixton, SW2 1EP

LONDON: WEST & NORTHWEST

Going beyond the binary—Marxism, gender and trans politics

Thu 25 Apr, 7.30pm, Woodlane Community Centre, 78 White City Cl, Shepherd's Bush, W12 7DZ

MANCHESTER: CENTRAL

Brexit shambles, Labour splits—how can we end Tory rule?

Wed 17 Apr, 7pm, Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount St, M2 5NS

NEWCASTLE

The Amritsar massacre 100 years on

Thu 18 Apr, 6.30pm, Floor 2 - Commercial Union House, 39 Pilgrim St, NE1 6QE

SWANSEA

A rebel's guide to Eleanor Marx

Sat 4 May, 7pm, Quaker House, 74 Mutley Plain, PL4 6LF

SHEFFIELD: CITY CENTRE

Irish civil rights 50 years on—the case for a united Ireland

Thu 18 Apr, 7pm, Central United Reformed Church, 6-8 Greenleaf Rd, Walthamstow, E17 6QQ

SWANSEA

Going beyond the binary—Marxism, gender and trans politics

Thu 25 Apr, 7.30pm, Woodlane Community Centre, 78 White City Cl, Shepherd's Bush, W12 7DZ

TELFORD

A Marxist History of the Labour Party

Wed 1 May, 7.30pm, Carriages, The Parade, Wellington, TF1 1PY

WOLVERHAMPTON AND WALSALL

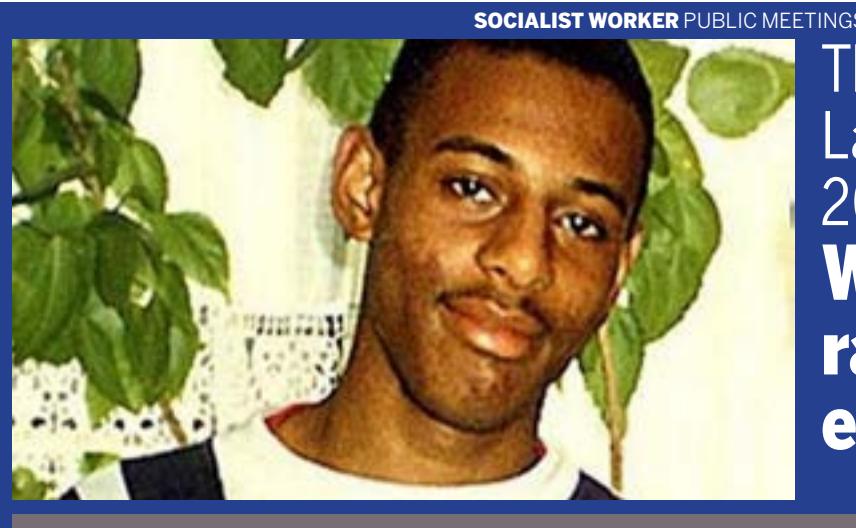
How we fight for a revolution

Wed 24 Apr, 7.30pm, Ice Stone Gelato, 65 Queen St, WV1 3BY

YORK

Traditional British values—a racist concept?

Wed 24 Apr, 7.30pm, Sea Horse Hotel, 4 Fawcett St, YO10 4AH



SOCIALIST WORKER PUBLIC MEETINGS

The Stephen Lawrence Report 20 years on... **Why institutional racism still exists**

Celebrate resistance with Socialist Worker this May Day

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NATIONAL
Forum—how can we stop the far right across Europe?
Sat 1 June, 1pm, National Education Union, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, WC1H 9BD. Hosted by Stand Up To Racism



Dreams and prospects are broken in this fine Western

There's bags of atmosphere and mercifully few clichés in *The Sisters Brothers*—a poignant, brutal and sometimes funny film, says **Alistair Farrow**

JACQUES AUDIARD'S latest film is his first for Hollywood. And for it he takes on one of US cinema's staples—the Western—and puts his own spin on it.

The result is a parable which veers between brutality and poignant insight, but never comes off the rails.

John C Reilly and Joaquin Phoenix play two brothers, Eli and Charlie Sisters, in the 1850s US West.

They are on the trail of chemist Hermann Kermit Warm—played by Riz Ahmed—on the orders of their boss The Commodore. They are to torture and kill Warm, but don't know why.

Also pursuing the chemist is private detective John Morris, played by Jake Gyllenhaal.

Warm wants to set up “a society where the relationships among men aren't governed by profit” with the proceeds from a discovery he has made. It's a discovery that has made him a wanted man.

“This world is an abomination,” he says, raging against armed men being sent to kill and torture him.

Twisted

Each character is twisted in one way or another by the society they live in.

Morris dreams of going back to a fantasy version of a time when the capitalist system was not spreading across the West.

“Scarcely did I ever want to change such hours of freedom with all the hours of civilisation,” he writes.

Charlie embraces the brutality of his life as an assassin and bosses' stooge, mocking anyone who thinks it can be any different. Meanwhile Eli dreams of leaving The Commodore's service, settling



JOHN C REILLY AND JOAQUIN PHOENIX ARE THE SISTERS BROTHERS

down and opening a shop.

All the pieces are set up nicely for a series of catastrophic events that blow apart all the characters' ideas.

Morris and Warm's utopian fantasies are cruelly ripped away, Eli is forced to give up his dreams and take on the burden of fighting off The Commodore's henchmen.

The characters in this film are

detailed and interesting. The dialogue avoids the clichés of the genre.

It's a well-balanced narrative, moving briskly when it needs to and moving slowly when it needs to do that as well.

And the cinematography is well-judged. Familiar wide shots of the landscape of the western US are mixed with claustrophobic close-ups

so we're not left with a romantic fantasy.

This is a superior Western which taps into a lot of the same themes as Paul Thomas Anderson's *There Will Be Blood*.

It's about how the dehumanising logic of capitalism brutalises everything it touches. But it's also about the possibility of redemption.

Racism in the US is tied up in its ‘frontier’ narrative

BOOK

THE END OF THE MYTH

By Greg Grandin
Metropolitan Books

THE FRONTIER is central to American mythology, as anyone who's ever seen a Western knows.

For historian Greg Grandin, the story of the frontier is more like Cormac McCarthy's macabre anti-Western novel *Blood Meridian*.

He tells the history of the racist, expansionist settler colonialism that dispossessed and

exterminated Native Americans, enslaved millions of Africans, and conquered half of Mexico.

Grandin shows that “the country's founding paradox—the promise of political freedom and the reality of racial subjugation” remains.

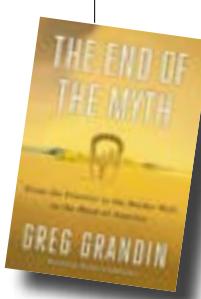
From the 1890s onwards it was expressed in pursuing “the overseas frontier”—first establishing dominance of the Western Hemisphere, then projecting US power globally in the twentieth century.

As the US became

the dominant capitalist power, the rhetoric of liberal expansionism soared.

But the actual US border with Mexico became the subject of “an obsession with fortification against what's outside” that “is symptomatic of trouble inside”.

Grandin shows how US economic domination of Mexico has sent great numbers of migrants north of the border.



Act clamped down migration from Europe and Asia. This “reinforced Mexico's importance as a source of cheap labour”.

But “it created an agency—the US Border Patrol—that institutionalised a virulent form of nativism”.

Grandin argues that America's imperial wars projected the racism outwards.

But defeat, from Vietnam

to Iraq, has increasingly turned the racist violence back inwards. Far right agitation and outright vigilantism concentrated on the border.

Donald Trump gave these forces what they wanted by promising the border wall. But this also marked the end of the ideology of the frontier.

Grandin concludes by invoking “the choice between barbarism and socialism”, though he somewhat spoils this by adding “or at least social democracy”.

Alex Callinicos

BOOK

THE HALF-GOD OF RAINFALL

By Inua Ellams

THE HALF-GOD of Rainfall is a contemporary tale of violence, trauma and taking back power.

Poet Inua Ellams combines Greek and West African Yoruba mythology to create a world where gods watch mortals play basketball. The text defies genre—part Homeric-style epic, part revenge tragedy—and is a disorienting and unsettling read.

The story follows Modupe, a mortal, and her son Demi, a half Nigerian mortal, half Olympian child. From the outset, Modupe's existence is one of vulnerability and objectification.

As a child and a young woman, male Gods leer at her with “prying eyes” and a “naked hunger”. She is dehumanised and left “death like” by Zeus when he violently rapes her and causes her to become pregnant.

Modupe's mother is tormented by the abuse she has experienced at the hands of men. In a



desperate attempt to protect her daughter, Modupe's mother sacrifices her life to the River Goddess Osun.

Splitting her womb with a knife, she bleeds onto her daughter's chest. There is nothing subtle about this symbolism of a mother destroying her reproductive organs and bleeding out on her daughter.

Her sacrifice is nonetheless in vain. Even in a story about gods, where inconceivable battles take place across galaxies, women are not safe from the violence of men.

Demi's death triggers an outpouring of rage, not just from Modupe, but all the goddesses who have been abused by Zeus. They find solidarity in their suffering and give Modupe their powers to destroy Zeus and all that he represents.

The Half-God of Rainfall is inspired by mythology but reflects a reality where gendered violence is the norm. But it doesn't dwell on women as victims—instead showing the strength of unity, where women fight back against their oppressors and win.

Camilla James

FTHE tide of British rule in India can be said to have turned on one day it would undoubtedly be Sunday 13 April, 1919.

In the Punjabi city of Amritsar, a British officer ordered his troops to fire without warning into a peaceful gathering of unarmed Indians. Hundreds were killed in cold blood.

Britain had committed a crime so heinous that anger spread to millions of Indians who now backed calls for independence. And, as the details became clear, even much of the Westminster establishment recoiled.

General Reginald Dyer had arrived in the city in the wake of a day of protests, killing and rioting.

On 10 April soldiers shot marchers demanding an end to repression and for their leaders to be brought back from British-imposed exile.

In return buildings associated with the Empire were burned, and their staff hunted down.

Thousands filled the streets chanting, "It's ok to loot because it's government property," and, "Victory to Gandhi."

Vicious and occasionally deadly assaults on a small number of white people sent the British incandescent with rage. Hundreds of troops began arriving in the city preparing for revenge.

Their officers thought the riots were a clear signal to the rest of the Punjab to rise up.

In their minds, this rebellion was an echo of the 1857 uprising, when Indian soldiers had turned their guns on their British officers. That launched a war that swept the occupiers out of much of the north, including Delhi. British control of India had hung by a thread.

Prize

India was too big a prize to be lost. It was an enormous source of raw materials for British factories. It produced valuable commodities such as tea and spices which were sold all over the world.

And, as the British ran down India's own industries, it also became a huge market for British-made goods.

India's strategic location also made it vital for control of world trade routes, and British domination in Asia and beyond.

The lesson for today was clear. To save the Empire, Amritsar must be made to pay a heavy price for its defiance.

Some officers talked of bombing the centre of the city.

But Dyer, who now took command, had other ideas.

He announced a curfew and a ban on any gathering of Indians. When independence activists defied his orders by calling for a protest rally in the centre of the city the following day, the general sprang into action.

On 13 April he had fifty armed troops and two



THE AMRITSAR massacre as depicted in the film Gandhi

A VERY BRITISH MASSACRE

Hundreds killed, thousands injured and bodies piled on top of each other. **Yuri Prasad** tells the story of one of the bloodiest crimes committed by the British Empire in India



General Reginald Dyer

vehicle-mounted heavy machine guns prepared. On hearing the planned gathering was happening, he led his patrol into the heart of the city.

But Dyer, who now took command, had other ideas.

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On 13 April he had fifty armed troops and two

There was a heap of the dead and wounded over, under and all around me

park was surrounded by high walls and entry was by a small number of narrow passages. Having squeezed their way in, visitors would have seen a raised platform surrounded by a crowd and heard campaigners denouncing British rule.

The park was full with an estimated 15,000 people—Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus—some of who were from outside the city and knew nothing of Dyer's ban.

The general ordered his

troops to seal all the entrances to the Bagh so that no one could escape, and then instructed the rest of his force to take up position on the edge of the grounds.

Without warning, and at a range of just a few dozen meters, Dyer ordered the soldiers to open fire, directing their shots to where the crowd was most dense.

The firing lasted for more than ten minutes, with 1,650 rounds spent. Some bullets passed through their initial target only to hit others as they continued.

People ran in all directions and towards the exits where bodies simply piled onto each other as the bullets ricocheted around them.

Moulvi Ghulam Jilani, a cattle inspector, described how he ran towards a wall, "and fell on a mass of dead and wounded persons. Many others fell on me."

"There was a heap of the dead and wounded over, under and all around me. I felt suffocated. I thought I was going to die. I cannot remember how I managed to extricate myself when the firing ceased. I crept out and then fled."

AT ONE point, Dyer turned to one of his officers and said, "Do you think they've had enough?" Before continuing, saying, "No, we'll give them 4 rounds more." So the fifty soldiers fired another 200 rounds.

One man who had been shot recalled, "After the soldiers had left, I looked around. There must have been more than a thousand corpses there. The whole place was strewn with them."

"In addition to the dead, there must have been about a thousand wounded persons lying there. Close by where I was lying, I saw a young boy, aged about 12 years, lying dead with a child of about 3 years clasped in his arms, also dead."

Dyer was clear that the firing was not simply about enforcing his ban on meetings.

"I fired and continued to fire until the crowd dispersed and I consider this is the least amount of firing which would produce the necessary moral and widespread effect it was my duty to produce," he said.

"It was no longer a question of merely dispersing the crowd, but one of producing a sufficient moral effect."

His "moral lesson" continued after the massacre.

The army set up martial law courts for those accused of wrongdoing. Not only was there widespread torture, but there were all manner of collective punishments.

Teenage "rioters" were tied to poles in the street, and whipped until they lost consciousness, revived by water, and then whipped again. Their parents were forced to watch the spectacle.

At the place where a white woman was badly assaulted, a "crawling order" was declared.

Any Indian who wanted to pass, had to get on down on their hands and knees and crawl the length of the street while being assaulted by British soldiers' rifle butts.

But as news of the atrocity filtered out and anger spread across India, sections of the British ruling class became fearful. They worried that, rather than drive back a rebellion, Dyer's actions had encouraged one.

They commissioned an inquiry that whitewashed the establishment but lambasted Dyer alone for the shooting policy. The general was eventually ordered to resign after the British House of Commons agreed the censure.

Exemplary

But others in the establishment were livid at what they saw as retreat. They believed Dyer had been following the long-held military policy of using exemplary violence when dealing with "semi-civilised" peoples.

They organised a campaign in the right wing press to clear Dyer's name and to raise funds for him, eventually collecting some £25,000—approximately £725,000 today.

It dubbed him, "The man who saved India."

Within a year, whatever the splits among the ruling class, it was clear to all that the massacre had sparked a new wave of resistance.

Gandhi and other leaders of the Indian National Congress announced a new mass campaign of "non-cooperation" to bring independence within a year.

British goods were burned by crowds in the streets, and businesses were shut down.

Children withdrew from British schools and colleges, and all official institutions of state were boycotted.

Within the first month of the campaign about 9,000 pupils left British schools to join new "national institutions". Trade in foreign cloth collapsed, its value reduced by around half.

In some parts of the country, class struggles fused with the movement for national liberation. It became impossible to distinguish between a meeting of peasants and that of the Non-Cooperation Movement.

It took another 27 years for India to obtain its independence.

READ MORE

● Amritsar 1919—an empire of fear and the making of a massacre by Kim A Wagner £20.00

● India—Imperialism, Partition and Resistance by Sam Ashman Marxist Internet Archive bit.ly/2v3PqPj

● The Blood Never Dried by John Newsinger £13.99

Available at Bookmarks, the socialist bookshop. Phone 020 7637 1848 or go to bookmarksbookshop.co.uk



British soldiers enforce the "crawling order" that forced Indians to crawl the length of a street in Amritsar (top)

A British cartoon echoes the photograph, which horrified some people in Britain (above)

The British clung on with a deliberate policy of violence combined with divide and rule, which separated Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs into competing groups.

Today the British political class admits that Amritsar was a terrible mistake, albeit one committed by a single "rogue officer". It offers mealy-mouthed apologies.

Our demand should be not for a more sincere apology for one massacre.

We need an apology for the whole British Empire, which destroyed the lives of millions of Indians and continues to blight the South Asian sub-continent today.

The real reckoning will be when we sweep the system of imperialism upon which this horror was based.

The meat industry is destructive but changing our diets won't be enough to save the planet, says **Martin Empson**

MILLIONS OF people want to do something to "save the world". We are told to recycle more, stop using plastics and change our behaviour in all sorts of ways to reduce our environmental footprint.

One change that we are often urged to make is to go vegetarian or vegan.

Many people argue that this would have a big impact on the environment. And changing diets is popular.

In 2017 the demand for meat-free food rose by almost 1,000 percent and even big food companies such as Greggs and McDonald's are offering vegan options. But is a change of diet enough to avoid environmental chaos?

At first glance it would seem the answer is yes.

Industrial agriculture, in particular the meat industry, is very damaging to the environment because it is heavily dependent on fossil fuels, chemical pesticides and fertiliser.

All agriculture has some impact on the environment. But campaigners often highlight the farming of livestock.

For instance, activists have long protested against the destruction of South American rainforests that are cleared to make way for cattle farms. This has helped drive species extinction and the loss of biodiversity—the variety of life on Earth.

The real reckoning will be when we sweep the system of imperialism upon which this horror was based.

Carbon

It's also contributed to global warming through the destruction of trees and other plants that remove carbon from the atmosphere.

Livestock farming is destructive because feed has to be produced for the animals to eat.

So land must be set aside to grow food, using pesticides and fertilisers, and sometimes clearing forests, for the animals.

FOCUS ON FOOD

Can eating less meat stop environmental chaos?



CATTLE FARMING has contributed to global warming

into vast factory farms is not just cruel—it's profitable and destructive.

Modern industrial farming has developed in a particularly harmful way.

Fields of single crops such as corn or wheat stretch for miles and miles, requiring vast quantities of inputs such as water and chemicals.

Sustainable

But historically farmers have produced food in much more sustainable ways—using fewer inputs and mixing crops and animals together.

The high levels of energy required by industrial farms mean that a tonne of maize grown in the US uses 160 litres of oil compared to less than five litres in Mexico.

Meanwhile the peasants and workers who farm have been driven off the land, or work for poverty wages.

The planet desperately needs sustainable agriculture and so do the people who eat the food. We need healthier diets with less processed foods.

But winning this means kicking out the small number of food multinationals that have created a highly unsustainable food system.

Under capitalism, it isn't only meat production that damages the environment—it's the entire food industry.

Even if everyone could be convinced to go vegan, we would still have to get rid of the capitalist system that creates our food.

The world's workers need to build a new society where food is produced in a sustainable way.

We are sold a high meat diet as this makes money for big multinationals

Tories are making us sick, say NHS workers

by TOMÁS TENGELY-EVANS

PRESSES FACED by NHS workers dominated the Unison union's health conference in Bournemouth this week.

The debates reflected chronic understaffing, rocketing workloads and growing workplace stress across the health service.

Sam Hemraj from Unison's health service group executive attacked the "underfunding and lack of care of staff and understanding by the Tory government".

She explained that the "pressures caused by cuts to services" also affect mental health service workers.

Illness

The NHS annual staff survey for 2018 showed work-related illness at a five-year high.

Four out of ten workers reported feeling unwell due to stress—and fewer than one in three thought bosses took health and well-being seriously.

Motions called for more in-work support for staff who

BACK STORY

The Unison union held its health conference this week amid an NHS crisis

- Tory privatisation and cuts have worsened understaffing and stress
- Delegates said poor conditions are harming workers' mental health
- They passed motions calling for more support at work for staff
- Some said partnership with hospital managers can solve the NHS crisis
- But others pointed out that workers and bosses have different interests
- Union leaders should fight Tory attacks now

suffer from mental distress. Fran, a delegate from Hampshire, said that two counsellors in her branch help other members.

"We offer the chance to our stewards to come to us, particularly if they've got burn out," she said.

"If this sort of service was offered within trusts, then



DELEGATES DISCUSS protecting workers' mental health at Unison health conference

"If I was the parent of a disabled child waiting for care I would be frustrated," she said.

Roger said his branch's campaign against a service review showed the real solution is to build workplace organisation and union strength.

Membership

"We said we can fight and we can win this, and during the campaign our membership doubled," he said.

"We have three new reps and a 97 percent vote for industrial action in an indicative ballot."

"Members aren't apathetic—when you give them a lead they will fight back."

The motions read like a prolonged cry for help.

But delegates who called for a general election and a fightback received the most enthusiastic applause.

Union leaders should lead a fight against the Tories—rather than looking to social partnership with bosses or waiting for a general election.

As Cherry said, "This is the time to fight—the Tories are weak."

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First guilty verdict isn't end of Hillsborough justice fight

It took a 30-year struggle against the establishment to get the first criminal conviction. With more trials set for this year, the fight is far from over, writes **Sadie Robinson**

RELATIVES OF people who died as a result of the Hillsborough disaster have vowed to keep fighting following a trial verdict last week.

Some 96 Liverpool fans died after being crushed at Sheffield Wednesday's Hillsborough football stadium during an FA cup semi-final in April 1989.

Graham Mackrell, the Sheffield Wednesday safety officer at the time, was last week found guilty of a health and safety offence in relation to the disaster.

Stephen Wright's brother Graham died as a result of the crush. Stephen told Socialist Worker, "There was an audible 'yes' in the courtroom when people heard that Mackrell had been found guilty.

"He is the only person to have been convicted of anything in relation to Hillsborough and it's taken nearly 30 years."

Stephen said that the fight for "truth and justice" for the victims will continue. "We'll never give in," he said. "The fight goes on." David Duckenfield was police match commander on the day of the disaster.

He had been charged with 95 counts of manslaughter by gross negligence. Duckenfield couldn't be charged over the 96th death, that of Tony Bland, because he died four years after the crush.

Retrial

Duckenfield could face a retrial after the jury failed to reach a verdict on the charges.

Fans were crushed in pens 3 and 4 at the Leppings Lane end of the stadium. Several told the court they were unable to move or help others. Many witnesses described "chaos" in



A TRIBUTE thirty years ago

the immediate aftermath of the crush.

The trial heard that police failed to stop a build-up of fans outside the turnstiles. The judge, Sir Peter Openshaw, said that "serious problems" had "certainly developed by 2.25pm" on the day.

At 2.52pm, Duckenfield ordered a gate to be opened to relieve the pressure outside the turnstiles.

The court heard that most fans who entered went down a tunnel into pens 3 and 4. It heard evidence that police

had blocked the tunnel at previous matches. The prosecution argued that Duckenfield gave no thought as to where fans would go and failed to block the tunnel.

It said he didn't have an adequate grasp of the ground's geography and failed to give orders to officers about how to safely manage fans.

Duckenfield's defence said officers at the turnstiles failed to communicate the scale of the problem to Duckenfield, and failed to take

initiatives to keep fans safe.

It said there were serious radio problems and that Duckenfield shouldn't have been put in charge of commanding the match because of his inexperience.

Benjamin Myers, representing Duckenfield, said the many factors lie behind the disaster including "some aspects of crowd behaviour".

The prosecution said it was not suggesting that fans attending the 1989 semi-final were "hooligans".

The state blocked campaign

THE RECENT trials came about because campaigners spent decades fighting for justice—in the teeth of opposition and lies from the Tories, The Sun newspaper and others.

Inquests in 1991 delivered rulings of accidental death.

In 1996 Margaret Thatcher's former press secretary Sir Bernard Ingham said people should "shut up about Hillsborough".

In December 2012, the original inquest verdicts were quashed.

Fresh inquests ruled in April 2016 that fans had been unlawfully killed.

Former SYP chief superintendent Donald Denton, former South Yorkshire Police (SYP) detective chief inspector Alan Foster and former SYP solicitor Peter Metcalf are due to stand trial later this year.

They are charged with perverting the course of justice.

The long fight for justice has taken its toll on many families.

Sheila Coleman from the Hillsborough Justice Campaign told Socialist Worker, "You cannot help but reflect on the wisdom of maintaining a campaign over so many years.

"There remains a camaraderie and a collective spirit to fight on among many of the bereaved and survivors. I marvel at their resilience. Their fundamental humanity gives me hope for a better world."

Sheila Coleman will speak at Marxism 2019. marxismfestival.org.uk

Mackrell didn't 'take reasonable care' of fans' safety

GRAHAM Mackrell is the first person to be convicted of a criminal offence in relation to Hillsborough.

A jury last week found him guilty of an offence under the 1974 Health and Safety at Work Act.

Mackrell "failed to take reasonable care" for fans' health and safety by failing to ensure there were enough turnstiles to stop "unduly large crowds" developing.

The offence is punishable by fine and Mackrell is set to be sentenced on 13 May.

The court heard that 10,100 Liverpool fans with standing tickets had to enter through seven turnstiles. By 2.30pm over 5,700 fans still had to enter through the turnstiles and a crowd had built up outside them.

Mackrell was initially charged with another offence—of failing to agree with police methods of admission to the ground prior to the match. The prosecution dropped this charge due to "insufficient evidence".

Mackrell became Sheffield Wednesday



Graham Mackrell has been found guilty

secretary in December 1986.

The disaster didn't hinder his career.

He stayed at Sheffield Wednesday until 1999, when he left to become chief executive of West Ham United.

Mackrell is currently Football Administrator for the League Managers' Association (LMA), the trade union for a number of managers in English football.

The LMA hadn't commented on his position as Socialist Worker went to press.

IN BRIEF

Bin the Anglesey outsource pay gap

BIN WORKERS on Anglesey are set to strike for seven days from 22 April.

The Unite union members are outsourced to Biffa, and are in dispute with the Ynys Mon local authority over pay and collections.

Paddy McNaught, Unite Wales regional officer, said, "These workers are the lowest paid refuse collectors in Wales. Whilst the loaders are on the minimum wage the drivers are paid just a few pence per hour more."

A result to fight the BT redundancies

WORKERS AT the BT telecommunications company have rejected a management "People Framework" to overhaul the firm's pay and grading structures.

Prospect members voted by 96 percent to reject it, following a recommendation to do so by their union.

New CEO Philip Jansen is reported to want to get rid of as much as 25 percent of the firm's 100,000 workforce.

Strikes coming on the Underground?

A TUBE strike could be on the cards after the RMT and Aslef unions rejected bosses' latest offer.

Around 1,000 RMT members were offered a one-year, 2.5 percent deal—with no reduction in the working week, better work-life balance or improved travel facilities.

Two strikes on London Overground

THE LONDON Overground saw strikes by two groups of workers last week.

Travel Safe Officers struck on 2 April, and cleaners—outsourced to Vinci—staged a 72-hour strike from 4 April.

Strikers held a joint demonstration at Arriva Rail London's headquarters on Thursday of last week.

Rallying against Swansea far right

STAND UP To Racism Swansea is calling a counter-protest against a far right mobilisation led by Islamophobe Ann Marie Waters.

There have been various attempts by the far right over the years to try and occupy the city's main square. They have all failed.

Swansea anti-racists are horrified that such blatant Islamophobes will try and agitate in the wake of Christchurch.

They have put out a call—"Leave or stay, Islamophobia no way".

Join the demonstration—assemble 11am, 27 April, Castle Square, Swansea

VICTIMISATION



BUILDING SUPPORT for Lee Humber at Ruskin College, Oxford

PICTURE: SOCIALIST WORKER

SCHOOLS



NEU union members in action

PICTURE: SOCIALIST WORKER

Inaugural NEU conference

THE FIRST NEU union conference takes place in Liverpool next week. The NEU school workers' union was formed by a merger of the NUT and ATL unions.

The conference takes place as education is under attack. The overwhelming majority of schools face real terms funding cuts. And the Tories are continuing with their academy programme.

Meanwhile real terms pay cuts and excessive workloads are driving more teachers out of the profession.

The conference will begin by discussing the fight for more school funding and against privatisation. Delegates will also discuss campaigns over climate change, working conditions, pay and much more.

The union's national executive committee has submitted a priority motion on LGBT+ inclusive

Relationship and Sex Education (RSE). It follows the removal of inclusive RSE education at Parkfield school in Birmingham after parent protests. The removal has given confidence to homophobes and bigots to go on the offensive against inclusive education.

The motion notes that parent opposition to inclusive RSE is "being organised by a range of anti-LGBT+ groups".

It says the union should oppose "any attempts to go back to the days of Section 28" where teachers were banned from treating LGBT+ relationships as equal.

The motion added that the union "should reject any attempt to use this issue to increase Islamophobia".

It instructs the union to lobby the government to make teaching about LGBT+ relationships statutory in schools.

EAST SUSSEX

Action against academies

NEU UNION members at three East Sussex schools have voted for strikes to stop them being turned into academies. Workers at Peacehaven Heights Primary School, Telscombe Cliffs School and Peacehaven Community School plan to walk out after Easter.

Parents at the schools are also campaigning to stop them being handed over to a private firm.

Parent Amanda said academies "exclude children more and take resources away from the front line to fund excessive chief executive salaries".

She added, "The schools would no longer be accountable to the local community."

The NEU said the county council has refused to confirm the name of the private company that could take over the running of the schools. It had submitted Freedom of Information requests but the council cited "commercial confidentiality" and refused to disclose the information.

Phil Clarke is secretary of the Lewes, Eastbourne and Wealden NEU. He said, "After nearly 20 years of the academy programme there is no evidence they improve standards."

"There is plenty of evidence they invite excessive management pay, high exclusion rates and damage special education needs provision."

COLLEGE STRIKES

West Midlands fights back for better pay

PICTURE: MARTIN LYNCH

WORKERS AT three West Midlands colleges are striking this week over pay. UCU union members at City of Wolverhampton College began a three-day strike on Monday.

Those at the Warwickshire College Group began a two-day walkout on the same day, and union members at Coventry College started a three-day strike on Tuesday.

Workers are fighting a 25 percent real terms pay loss over a decade and excessive workloads.

UCU members at five colleges struck last month, following walkouts at 12 colleges at the end of January and at six

colleges last November. The action has seen more people join the union.

Strikers planned a mass protest on Wednesday.

Picket lines were at all three sites at the City of Wolverhampton College, at seven sites at the Warwickshire College Group and at two sites at Coventry.

Some 92 percent of union members who voted at Coventry College backed strikes, 91 percent at City of Wolverhampton College and 76 percent at the Warwickshire College Group.

● Protest—assemble 12 noon, 10 April, Lady Godiva statue, Coventry

REDUNDANCIES

GMB UNION members at Halley Academy in south east London struck on Thursday of last week against redundancies.

The Leigh Academy Trust which runs the school, has served redundancy notices on 19 out of 28 teaching assistants (TAs).

This would leave only nine to support around 160 students, including those with special educational

needs and disabilities. Bosses are paying the CEO a salary that would pay for 12 TAs.

The school has told TAs to leave the workplace straight away, without putting into place support for vulnerable students.

Campaigning plans are being discussed during the Easter break and NEU and Unison union members are balloting.

Andy Reid

CIVIL SERVICE

Fight for every vote in national pay ballot

by NICK CLARK

WITH JUST under three weeks to go before a national ballot for strikes over civil service pay closes, activists still have plenty of work to do to deliver a strong yes vote.

Members of the PCS union in major government departments could strike for a 10 percent pay rise. This would put an end to years of below-inflation 1 percent pay rises—effectively a pay cut.

But first activists have to make sure that the ballot of members returns a vote in favour of strikes—and that it meets the 50 percent turnout threshold imposed by Tory anti-union laws.

Kate Douglas from the PCS's Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire DWP branch told Socialist Worker what activists there have done to break the threshold.

She said they had used a combination of technology and face-to-face campaigning to contact members.

"The PCS has given reps an app to call members that lets you tick off people as you contact them," she said.

"We give each rep two members to call up. Once they've encouraged those members to vote, we give them two more."

She added, "We've also leafleted every office and



TAX OFFICE strikers in west London are fighting for jobs

PICTURE: PCS UNION ON TWITTER

we've got posters and stickers everywhere.

"It's about keeping going—and keeping the campaign at a really high profile."

■ WORKERS AT a west London tax office were set to begin a three day strike on Wednesday of this week in a fight to save jobs.

The members of the PCS union are striking to stop their office in the borough of Ealing from closing and being relocated to east London.

The relocation would force workers to choose between commuting up to three hours a day, or taking redundancy.

Union officials fear it could mean more than 100 people would lose their jobs. One striker told Socialist Worker that many workers in the Ealing office would be unable to make the journey.

"A lot of people here are disabled. It's difficult for some that can't commute for three hours every day," she said.

"And there are people with children who have to do the school run."

"If you're a parent you need to be near the school so if your child has an accident you can get there quickly."

The action this week is an escalation after workers struck for a full day on

Wednesday of last week and two previous-half day walkouts.

■ Send messages of support to saveealingtaxoffice@gmail.com

■ CATERING WORKERS at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) in central London began a three day strike on Monday.

The members of the PCS union are demanding that bosses at contractor Aramak pay them the London Living Wage of £10.55 an hour.

The union is also campaigning to have the workers brought back in house to be employed directly by BEIS.

Workers voted by 92 percent for strikes on a turnout of

TAXI DRIVERS

OVER 100 minicab drivers blocked London Bridge on Thursday of last week over having to pay the London congestion charge.

The workers argue that it should be their employers, not them, who pay the congestion charge as well as Transport for London's new emissions charge.

James Farrar from the IWGB union said, "This isn't really about congestion. It isn't really about reducing pollution. It's about money."

■ SIXTY CAB drivers in Luton employed by the operator Addison Lee are preparing for strikes.

Some 92 percent of drivers voted for action. They are members of the IWGB union.

The operator has jacked up the rent it charges drivers to use its cars to £220 a week. It has also increased the commission it takes from 30 percent to 35 percent.

The strike is set for 1 May.

LGBT+ RIGHTS



PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

Angry rally for LGBT+ rights

AROUND 500 people attended an angry rally outside the Dorchester Hotel in Park Lane, London last Saturday.

They were protesting over its owner, the Sultan of Brunei's appalling decision to reintroduce stoning as a punishment for homosexuality.

The furious crowd broke through police barriers and laid siege to the front of the

hotel attempting to break in.

This followed direct action by LGBT+ activists earlier in the week.

The rally was called by the Peter Tatchell Foundation.

This issue should be taken up in the trade union movement to show solidarity with LGBT+ people's rights across the world.

Michael Dance

CARE WORKERS

AFG workers keep battling

CARE WORKERS in the north west of England fighting for the national minimum wage struck for three days last week.

Workers at Alternative Futures Group (AFG) are battling against attempts to slash their overnight pay to just £30.

The Unison union members support vulnerable adults in their homes.

It would mean a cut of thousands of pounds for many already low paid workers.

Bosses claim they don't have enough money to pay workers for every hour they are on shift.

They are able to get away with this because of a legal ruling last year that a flat payment was allowed as workers will be asleep for part of their shift.

UNISON UNION members at Liverpool Women's Hospital have won their struggle to secure NHS rates of pay after a series of strikes.

The domestics, porters, catering and security staff are employed by private contractor OCS.

It had refused to pay them the same rate for the job as staff employed directly by the NHS.

Now OCS staff will receive the higher NHS rate.

This is worth more than £1 an hour—over £2,000 a year for full-time staff.

As part of a three-year deal, staff will also get the same payments as their colleagues for working antisocial hours, overtime and weekends.

The pay increase is to be jointly funded by OCS and the hospital trust.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Bins fightback in Angus

BIN WORKERS at Angus council near Dundee began a five day strike on Monday over changes to their terms and conditions.

Around 140 Unite union members in environmental services then plan strikes for the next 11 Mondays and Tuesdays.

Council bosses want to switch the current 7am-3pm shift to a 6am-2pm and a 2pm-10pm shift.

It is an attack on workers' work-life balance.

The council—controlled by a coalition of Lib Dems, Tories and Independents—has brought in temporary workers to break the strike.

Workers voted by 92 percent for strikes on a turnout of

87 percent. George Ramsey, Unite regional industrial officer said, "We firmly believe that these proposed changes will ultimately result in a poorer service for the public, and greater pressures on the workforce."

■ WORKERS AT Dundee City Council in the Unite and Unison unions have voted overwhelmingly for strikes in a consultative ballot.

Bosses at the SNP-led council want to impose compulsory redundancies, limit flexible retirement and reduce pay protection for some workers.

Full strike ballots are now being planned.

CLIMATE ACTION

Raging over planet's fate

AROUND 200 people took part in action organised by Extinction Rebellion in Swansea last Saturday.

A "funeral procession" went through the city to demand that the council declare a "climate emergency".

During the procession there was a temporary blockade of Barclays Bank, a citizens assembly (street meeting) and a sit down on the main road.

Among the protesters were environmental activists, students who had led the school strikes, Labour Party councillors, members of Swansea Labour Left and supporters of Swansea Socialist Workers Party.

Actions also took place in Leicester, Taunton and several other cities and towns.

Martin Chapman

Labour agrees to Tories' racist plan

ANTI-RACISTS WILL have to fight major battles to push back the racist and far right challenge in elections and to defend workers' freedom of movement.

That will be true whatever the manoeuvres over Brexit.

Labour Party leaders will be part of that first struggle. But they have abandoned the second.

Theresa May's "video to the nation" last weekend included the line, "Now there's lots of things on which I disagree with the Labour Party on, but on Brexit I think there are some things we agree on". The first example she gave was "ending free movement".

Not a squeak of protest came from Labour.

Movement

"Insiders" told the Sunday Times newspaper that during May's talks with Labour over a possible new Brexit deal "an end to freedom of movement" was one of four points of agreement.

Of course it's not a new development. Labour's 2017 manifesto said that freedom of movement would end when Britain left the European Union. Successive Labour leaders have wrongly



THERESA MAY patronises everyone with her fireside chat

branded migration a problem, diverting attention from the Tories and the bosses—the real culprits for low wages and decaying services.

But it's new that Labour has now apparently elevated restricting migration to one of its "red line" demands over Brexit.

Arguing that immigration is a threat to workers who were

born in Britain stokes conflict between different sections of our class and weakens resistance to bosses everywhere.

It will make it harder to counter the racists in the European

Parliament elections which are now due to be held on 23 May. Delays to Brexit forced the Tories to formally begin the election process this week.

Already the racists, the far right and fascists sniff an opportunity to cash in on the anger over the Brexit fiasco. Former Ukip leader Nigel Farage said, "I'll be leading the Brexit Party into those European elections. "This is the

fightback and they're going to be very surprised by what they get."

Ukip denounced Farage's party as "an electoral vehicle for getting snouts back in the trough" and confirmed that it will run candidates across Britain.

Ukip leader Gerard Batten has recruited fascist Tommy Robinson as one of his advisers.

And Mark Meecham—also known as "Count Dankula"—who was convicted of



The far right and racists may profit from new EU elections

The ruling class is in crisis—we can beat them through mass struggle

THERESA MAY flew to Paris and Berlin this week to beg European leaders to allow the Brexit date to be pushed back to June.

But European Union (EU) leaders were expected to demand a longer delay of up to a year. This would involve strict conditions forcing Britain into "sincere cooperation" with the rest of the bloc.

The British parliament this week rushed through a law that said May has to call for an extension to avoid a no-deal Brexit. But it's the EU that makes that choice.



If any EU country vetoes an extension then Britain was set to leave the EU on Friday this week with no deal.

And in any case what will any extension be used for? It won't make May's deal—that has been defeated three times—any

more acceptable to MPs. As the Financial Times newspaper's lead political writer wrote this week, "If a longer

extension is agreed this week, what happens to Brexit? It will become the political equivalent of Chernobyl—a toxic burning vat, encased in a sarcophagus that no one dares go near."

Driven

The Tories have to be driven out. That's why Labour was wrong to get involved in the trap of talks to reach a compromise deal.

No deal agreed by May and the Tory cabinet is going to be in the interests of working class people.

Amid this chaos there needs to be a clear voice calling to link Brexit to other class issues. These include the destruction of the NHS, squeezed living standards, the brutal Universal Credit regime, the rise of racism, lack of action over climate change and much else.

But neither the trade union leaders nor Labour are doing this.

This is not a time of "normal" politics. The British ruling class faces a generalised crisis.

We don't need talks with May, we need struggle against her.